

The Story Adult Study Guide

For the Week of January 12, 2020

Chapter 14: “A Kingdom Torn in Two”



Key Events: the division of Israel into two kingdoms, the reign of Rehoboam king of Judah, the reign of Jeroboam king of Israel, the succession of kings

Key Characters: Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Ahab (see page 490 for descriptions)

Bible Reference for this Chapter: 1 Kings 12-16

1. God intended that the kings of Israel would serve not only as political leaders, but spiritual leaders. What problems occurred when political objectives overshadowed God’s spiritual priorities?
- Note about the divided kingdom on page 195: The southern kingdom of Judah consisted of two tribes, Judah and Simeon (Judah had become the dominant tribe since the time of the judges, and often the southern kingdom was referred to as the one tribe). The northern kingdom of Israel consisted of the other ten tribes. The land of the tribe of Benjamin was border territory and a portion of its land fell into both kingdoms. Most of Benjamin aligned with the northern tribes, but the area around Jerusalem remained under Rehoboam’s control.
2. Consider Jeroboam’s decision to make two golden calves for worship in the northern kingdom of Israel. (page 196) What confusion did this cause among the people? What are some modern-day examples of spiritual leaders confusing their followers?
 3. How was the death of Jeroboam’s son, Abijah, an act of wrath and mercy? (page 198)
 4. The deaths of Ahab’s sons (the last paragraph on page 202) fulfilled God’s warning after Jericho was destroyed by the Israelites in Joshua 6:26: “Cursed before the LORD is the one who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: At the cost of his firstborn son he will lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest he will set up its gates.” Discuss God’s omniscience (he knows everything) and the scope of this divine attribute.
 5. Define the term *loyalty*. Compare and contrast the loyalty of people (and Christians) with the loyalty of God.
 6. This chapter is full of conflict. What lessons about conflict and unity can you learn from the events in chapter 14?

7. Other thoughts and comments? Please share messages of personal comfort, hope, and encouragement you received from chapter 14.

Prayer Suggestions

- Thank God that despite human unfaithfulness and hostility throughout history, he continues to love us and call us to forgiveness and faith in Christ.
- Pray for forgiveness and healing in my relationships that are strained or broken.

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Study Guide Helps

1. To protect or extend their political power and kingdom, kings made decisions that disobeyed God and destroyed their relationship with God. Saul disregarded God’s instructions prior to a battle with the Philistines, trying to gain God’s favor by his own methods (page 142). Saul tried to kill God’s anointed king David in an attempt to keep the kingdom in his family. Solomon took many non-Israelite wives in an attempt to seal alliances and relationships with foreign nations, a move that lured him and the nation into idolatry (pages 191-192). Rehoboam foolishly followed the poor advice of his cronies in an attempt to increase his prestige and wealth at the expense of the people (page 194). Numerous kings in chapter 14 disregarded God’s Word entirely and acted like secular despots to enhance their positions. The two kingdoms resorted to constant warfare and fell into the pagan worship of the region under the direction of corrupt kings.
2. Jeroboam did not trust God’s promise to maintain his northern kingdom. He combined idol worship with worship of the Lord to keep his people from going to the temple in Jerusalem and changing their loyalties. Jeroboam’s introduction of false teachings and false teachers (non-Levites) began the process of people moving away from the truth and further into idolatry. Future kings of Israel would continue this course and become firmly entrenched in unbelief. *A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.* (Galatians 5:9) When evil and false teachings are introduced, they spread and lead to misunderstandings about the truths of God’s Word. Ultimately this threatens saving faith in Christ. There are examples in recent years of church leaders and church bodies making public declarations of beliefs/teachings contrary to the Word of God. Some of the most notable involve issues like homosexuality, the definition of marriage, abortion, religious pluralism, etc. False teachings call into question the supremacy of the Bible as God’s Word and the absolute source of truth.
3. Abijah’s death was an act of God’s wrath against Jeroboam for advocating idolatry in his kingdom and for refusing to stop after God’s warning. It was an act of mercy to Abijah, the crown prince, who would be spared the disgrace and suffering to come upon his father’s house (Jeroboam’s family was killed following a coup against his son Nadab). Abijah was the only descendent who would receive an honorable burial and memorial. Perhaps Abijah believed in God and was secured for salvation while he still believed.
4. There are a number of facets to God’s omniscience: 1) God knows every past action of mine and all people, in other words, God remembers everything exactly as it really happened; 2) God knows every present action – no one can hide anything from him; 3) God knows every future action (just because he knows the future doesn’t mean he causes it); 4) God knows every human thought and everything that’s in a person’s heart; 5) God knows every human need; 6) God knows what is truly right and wrong.
5. Loyalty (the state of being loyal) = constantly giving your allegiance, faithfulness and devotion to someone or something. God’s loyalty is demonstrated through all his promises made and kept – every word and promise he ever gave has been fulfilled or will be fulfilled completely. God’s loyalty is perfect and never changes or breaks. Man’s loyalty cannot compare to God’s, since human loyalty is tainted by sin. Selfishness conflicts with human loyalty to God and others – our sinful nature seeks gain for self. Our ability and motivation to be loyal to God and others comes from the power of the Holy Spirit working in us through faith. We by nature cannot be truly and constantly loyal; God empowers us to be faithful, steadfast and true.
6. This chapter reminds us that the devil, the world and our sinful nature are constantly at work to undo our relationship with others and God. Evil desires are at the root of the hostile actions of people like Rehoboam, Jeroboam, and Ahab, and you don’t need to be powerful and wealthy to succumb to these desires. Hostility impacts many people and generations physically and spiritually, and opposes God’s mission to save souls. Human unity is a fruit of spiritual unity: *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.* (Ephesians 4:3-5)
7. Answers will vary. Consider/discuss elements of chapter 14 that relate to our daily walk of faith.

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